

Listing of Claims:

1-19. (Canceled)

20. (Previously Presented) A method of assessing an encoded signal to locate a format in a plurality of candidate formats that was likely used to arrange the signal into blocks before the encoding was done, the method comprising:

performing a test on candidate formats in turn but refraining from testing further candidate formats once a candidate format passes the test, wherein the test determines whether or not a candidate format is likely to be the format used on the signal and the test, for a given candidate format, comprises:

using a Viterbi algorithm to determine trellis metrics for a point in said signal that would be an end point of a candidate block according to the given candidate format;

determining from said metrics the likelihood of occupation at said point of an end state of an encoding scheme used to create the encoded signal;

decoding a part of said signal ending at said point; and

performing a check using said decoded part to determine whether the candidate block satisfies an error protection scheme of the given candidate format.

21. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 20, wherein the step of determining the likelihood of occupation of the end state comprises comparing the metrics at the end point.

22. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 21, wherein the step of determining the likelihood of occupation of the end state comprises comparing the maximum metric at the end point with the end state metric at the end point.

23. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 20, wherein the likelihood of occupation obtained from said metrics is used to determine whether said checking step is to be performed.

24. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 20, wherein the likelihood of occupation obtained from said metrics is used to determine whether said decoding step is to be performed.

25. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 20, wherein the given candidate format specifies that the candidate block has a data part and a checksum part and the checking step comprises generating a corroborative checksum from a part of the candidate block that would be data according to the given candidate format and comparing the corroborative checksum with the said checksum part.

26. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 25, wherein said decoded part contains said data part of the candidate block.

27. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 25, wherein said decoded part contains a section only of said data part of the candidate block and the corroborative checksum is generated from said section using an intermediate checksum value as a starting point.

28. (Previously Presented) Apparatus for assessing an encoded signal to locate a format in a plurality of candidate formats that was likely used to arrange the signal into blocks before the encoding was done, the apparatus comprising:

a tester adapted to perform a test on candidate formats in turn and adapted to refrain from testing further candidate formats once a candidate format passes the test, wherein the test determines whether or not a candidate format is likely to be the format used on the signal and the tester comprises:

a calculator adapted to apply a Viterbi algorithm to determine trellis metrics for a point in said signal that would be an end point of a candidate block according to a given candidate format;

an assessor adapted to determine from said metrics the likelihood of occupation at said point of an end state of an encoding scheme used to create the encoded signal;

a decoder adapted to decode a part of said signal ending at said point; and

a checker adapted to perform a check using said decoded part to determine whether the candidate block satisfies an error protection scheme of the given candidate format.

29. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to claim 28, wherein the assessor is adapted to determine the likelihood of occupation of the end state by comparing metrics at the end point.

30. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to claim 29, wherein the assessor is adapted to determine the likelihood of occupation of the end state by comparing the maximum metric at the end point with the end state metric at the end point.

31. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to claim 28, wherein the likelihood of occupation obtained from said metrics is used to determine whether said check is to be performed.

32. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to claim 28, wherein the likelihood of occupation obtained from said metrics is used to determine whether the decoding is to be performed by the decoder.

33. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to claim 28, wherein the given candidate format specifies that the candidate block has a data part and a checksum part and the checker is adapted to generate a corroborative checksum from a part of the candidate block that would be

data according to the given candidate format and compare the corroborative checksum with said checksum part.

34. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to claim 33, wherein said decoded part contains said data part of the candidate block.

35. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to claim 33, wherein said decoded part contains a section only of said data part of the candidate block and the checker is adapted to generate the corroborative checksum from said section using an intermediate checksum value as a starting point.

36. (Previously Presented) A data carrier containing program code for causing data processing apparatus to perform a method of assessing an encoded signal to locate a format in a plurality of candidate formats that was likely used to arrange the signal into blocks before the encoding was done, the carrier containing program code for causing the data processing apparatus to perform a test on candidate formats in turn but refraining from testing further candidate formats once a candidate format passes the test, wherein the test determines whether or not a candidate format is likely to be the format used on the signal and the test, for a given candidate format, comprises:

- using a Viterbi algorithm to determine trellis metrics for a point in said signal that would be an end point of a candidate block according to the given candidate format;

- determining from said metrics the likelihood of occupation at said point of an end state of an encoding scheme used to create the encoded signal;

- decoding a part of said signal ending at said point; and

- performing a check using said decoded part to determine whether the candidate block satisfies an error protection scheme of the given candidate format.